a consultancy organisation to undertake an independent appraisal of the technical viability of the revival packages from the standpoint of funding by the Financial Institutions. The consultancy organisation has since submitted its report, based on which the Group would reformulate the revival packages. The final decision on the implementation of the reformulated revival packages would depend upon the tie-up of funding arrangements and outcome of the proceedings pending before the BIFR, which is a quasi-judicial authority.

[Translation]

Scholarship to SCs/STs

*270 SHRIMATI BHAVNA BEN DEVRAJ BHAI *CHIKHALIA
SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH

Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state

(a) whether the Government propose to do away with the scheme of giving scholarship to the children belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe;

(b) the maximum income limit prescribed in respect of different scholarship schemes sponsored by the Union Government for them scheme-wise;

(c) whether the Union Government propose to enhance the income limit;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(f) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to ensure proper utilisation of the funds earmarked for the schemes?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA) (a) No, Sir.

(b) The maximum income ceiling prescribed under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Post-Matric scholarship to students belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes is Rs. 44,500/- per annum. The maximum income ceiling prescribed under the Scheme of National Overseas Scholarship for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes etc. candidates is Rs. 60,000/- per annum.

(c) to (e) The income ceiling under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Post-matric scholarship to students belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has already been revised with effect from 1.10.1995 and the revised maximum income ceiling of Rs. 44,500/- per annum takes into account consumer price index for industrial workers upto October, 1995. It has also been decided to have revision of income ceiling under this Scheme once in two years and to link it with consumer price index for industrial workers. It is also proposed to enhance the existing income ceiling of Rs. 60,000/- per annum to Rs. 1,20,000/- per annum in case of the Scheme of National Overseas Scholarship for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes etc. candidates.

(f) Central assistance is released to concerned State Governments/ Union Territory Administrations for a financial year under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Post-matric Scholarship to students belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, while invariably accounting for the actual utilisation of Central assistance in previous financial year and the unspent Central assistance if any with them is adjusted at source while releasing due Central assistance which avoids accumulation of unspent Central assistance. Under the Scheme of National Overseas Scholarship for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes etc. candidates a lump-sum amount is placed at the disposal of Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Missions abroad directly pay the scholarship, University fee and air passage for return to India for the candidates. The Ministry of Welfare itself books air-passage for selected candidates to go abroad. The system ensure proper utilisation of funds under this Scheme.

[English]

Purulia Arms Drop

*271 SHRI RAM NAIK: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have conducted any inquiry into the Purulia Arms Dropping case;

(b) if so, the findings thereof;

(c) whether the Purulia Arms Dropping case has been fully resolved;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to check recurrence of such incidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA): (a) and (b) The case relating to arms dropping in Purulia district of West Bengal has been handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation. After investigation, CBI has filed chargesheet against 14 persons for offences under the provisions of Indian Penal Code, Arms Act, Indian Explosives Act, Explosives Substances Act and Aircraft Act. During investigation CBI have also recovered large quantity of arms and ammunition.

(c) and (d): CBI has intimated that further investigation is continuing for locating the absconding accused persons and also to trace out others who may be involved in the case. Investigation pertaining to financial transactions abroad is also continuing through Interpol and Letter Rogatory. CBI has filed chargesheet against the accused persons based on the evidence available during investigation. The investigation has brought out involvement of a section of Anand Margis

in the case. Investigation also shows that the arms and ammunition were procured for waging war against the State.

(e) Government is alive to the situation and have taken all steps in this regard which include gearing up of intelligence machinery stricter enforcement of existing regulations by the concerned Departments/ Organisations and a closer coordination between the concerned Central and State agencies.

Indian Forest Act, 1927

*272. SHRI SARAT PATTANAYAK. Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to amend Indian Forest Act, 1927; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (CAPT. JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A statement giving details is attached.

STATEMENT

Salient features of the proposed amendments to the Indian Forest Act, 1927

1. The proposed amendment seeks to update and consolidate various forest and related Acts and the amendments made by the States to the Indian Forest Act, (IFA) 1927.

2. Suitable new provisions have been proposed in the draft to give effect to the pronouncements made in the National Forest Policy, 1988.

3. A new orientation has been given in the proposed legislation to make it broad based legal instrument for ensuring ecological conservation. This is evident from the preamable of the draft and some of the chapters contained therein. Measures suggested for proper management of shifting cultivation areas would further corroborate the same. Similarly suitable provisions have been proposal for protection of trees in urban areas and privately owned rural areas.

4. Many more definitions relating to forestry have been added. These are 'Agro-forest', 'Biomass', 'Claimant', 'Degraded Forest', 'Divisional Forest Officer', 'Forest', 'Land', 'Licence', 'Licensee', 'Natural ecosystem', 'Person', 'Plantation', 'Red-sanders', 'Revenue Officer', 'Sandalwood', 'Sawing', 'Saw mill', 'Saw pit', 'Shifting cultivation', 'Transporter', 'Usufructs', 'Vehicle', 'Village Forest Committee' and 'Working plan'. These words are not defined in the present Act.

5. The village communities have been assigned greater duties and responsibilities in the management of forests adjoining habitations. It is proposed that village forests may be constituted in such a way that one village is accountable for one such forest. The village level institution to protect and manage such forests and to appropriate the forest produce therefrom.

6. A number of prevailing restrictions specially on felling and transport of timber from private land have been proposed to be relaxed to encourage social forestry and farm forestry programmes. A mechanism has been provided under which tree growers could register themselves with the Divisional Forest Officer. The State Forest Department will ensure that such tree growers get the requisite permission for felling and transport of tree and other forest produce within a stipulated period. An arrangement has been suggested under which village institutions incharge of village forests and other community lands could assign earmarked areas to individuals for tree planting and fodder cultivation. This is expected to encourage peoples participation in such activities. Private land holdings are proposed to be exempted from the purview of the land ceiling laws to the extent these bear tree plantation (other than horticultural or commercial cash crops).

7. Suitable provisions have been sought to be made to ensure that finances are mobilised for afforestation and related activities. The State Governments can levy a cess on sale of forest produce to create a separate fund exclusively for forest protection and development. The village communities have also been empowered to levy a similar cess for mobilising resources for this purpose. A minimum support price has been proposed for purchase of forest produce from private growers with a view to give them encouragement.

8. A number of regulatory measures have been provided for effective control on forest based industries. Requisite provisions have been made to ensure that industries using forest produce as a raw-material are not set up without ascertaining adequate availability of such raw-material. The Government has been empowered to review leases/agreements for supply of forest produce to industries and to effect appropriate changes in such deeds. State Governments have also been empowered to take over trade and disposal of notified forest produce.